

A BRIEF
[CHARACTER
OF 27 September 1659
Englands Distraction:

BEING
The Copy of a Letter, sent into the
Country by a Gentleman of the
Middle-Temple.

By Th. Le. Wh: Gent.



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A BRIEF
 CHARACTER
 OF
 ENGLANDS
 Distractions.

SIR,

H Appily amidst these our late Distractions here at *London*, you may expect some other News, either from hence or from abroad, which in all the, intercourses between us, you know I have evermore avoided, and left that to Diurnals, and such as delight to tell of Noveltyes; Only to that, which is I presume long since known to you and all the three Nations; I send you this as it is, the grounds of the present, and late differences, between the Army Officers, and remnant of the old Legal Parliament; for so I stile it, in respect, that it was summoned by the late King. As to all the other Assemblies, or rather Conventicles, they both came together, and sate to little other purpose, than to assume to themselves the name of a Parliament, without the Essence, Summons, and due form of our Antient great Councils; The relicts of the long Parliament being first put down by the Army, and of late sat up, and again cashiered by the power of the Sword: and likewise the Protector divested of his power, as a Partner, with the Parliament in the late established Government, upon this Reason and Ground, that the Grandees would not admit of any single Person; as also, for that the Parliament as 'tis alleaged, acted irregularly, and not according to the humor of the Souldier. This is generally conceived to be the

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ground

ground of the present Distractions; in the mean time, judge you, where we are (the Legislative power being laid a side) and the Nation left without any Government, but that of the Sword.

'Tis true; it is in common discourse, that there is a Government informing, but what that is, or will be, God knows; you know Kings, single Persons, Peers, and Parliaments, are not now in *verum natura*, neither any Settlement in any of the Courts of Judicature, that may rightly, and legally, determine *meum et tuum*.

Some there are, that say the Grandees will pitch on that frame, which hath been so happily established by the Hollanders; and indeed their case, and ours, is of so near a kin, in discarding Kings and single Persons, that I confesse it may invite our great Masters to follow their pattern.

Others there are, that propose a Government answerable to that of the Romans, on their putting down *Tarquinus Superbus* their last King, when as the Senate assumed the sole power of Government to themselves; as the best and most durable, though this sort look not back to those interruptions which often befall them by the Tribunes of the people, their Censors, Dictators, and at last, that of their Armies, in the election of their Emperors without either the consent, or approbation of the Senate, to speak in terms of truth, our case and theirs, are much alike.

Others there are, that propose the Venetian Government, were their Duke as a single Person, rules no otherwise, than as their Grand Council shall admit and approve.

But the Major part of the people, are for *Charles Stuart's* Interest, hoping that these our Distractions, conduce to the bringing him in, though the wiser sort, would have him ty'd up to such conditions that happily will neither become the propounders, or his acceptance; This sort not foreseeing the future, and that in case he comes in, otherwise, it must necessarily be by the Swords of Strangers, and a party here at home, then 'tis most perspicuous, that he will come in with a revengeful heart, and then no man can expect from him other measure, than a reversion of all the Crown Lands, the Royal Houses, with their rich Ornaments, the Regalia, and what not? that may right him, as well for the Crown Lands, as his Fathers Blood. Woe than to such purchasers, as have enriched themselves, by buying the Crown Lands at under rates; neither must such, as have not been guilty of getting those good bargains, believe to escape scot-free, for all mens Estates, will be then liable to his conquering Sword, neither will this be the worst of such a turn of fortune for our Religion, Laws, and immunities, of every free born Subject, must vail the Bonnet to that prevailing power.

All this is too plain and manifest, which necessarily will befall the

the Universal Nation, wherein not only the Nocent but the Innocent will be in a like condition.

Now Sir, there's another sort, that say, we are too much English, in relation to the old Proverb (which you know) is, that an English man knows not when he is well, and that there was a Government set up by old *Oliver*, between him and a Parliament, as also that during his time they lived in peace and quietness, as also that the Laws and Justice had a free and open current, and many tedious suits ended by his means by way of reference, and that he kept a Court, answerable to the State and honour of the English Nation, entertained all Ambassadors of forein Princes and States, with his Guards of Horse and Foot, with his Controller, Stewards, Master of Requests, and Master of the Ceremonies, and that he was courted and admired by most of the Princes and States of Europe; whereas now there is no Person, no place, whereunto any Addresses are to be made from abroad, to the dishonour and scorn of the Nation; They farther say, and allege our blessed Saviours Oracles, *ut semini in faceris ita ut metes*, for that the same person was after his death vilified, and his Son shamefully disgraced, and set at nought, by those which the Souldiers so lately hath put down in retribution of the ingratitude shewed to him, whom the whole Nation knows was the prime instrument of reducing the three Nations to peace, and quietness, and that in a wise to the wonder of the world.

The premises rightly considered, where are we now? otherwise than as Slaves of a new edition; But setting aside this our sad condition as it relates to our temporal estates, let us a little look back to that of our spiritual condition, and the obliquies of the Church, where instead of Reformation, (of which God knows there was need enough, at the sitting down of the long Parliament) too many learned and Orthodox Ministers have been put out of their Livings, and mechanick, ignorant, and illiterate Sectaries prefer'd, and many Congregations and Parishes both in *England* and *Wales*, left without any pious or able Minister, either to read, pray, or preach, as it becomes one, that hath *Cura animarum*, Sectaries, and Sectaricks bearing the sway, and trampling on the Orthodox and true Protestant Religion, without any Reformation. Again, if we look back to our National Laws, (as the case stands) who now shall either make new ones, or abolish old and useless ones, since Parliaments are set at nought and laid aside; Nay, where is now that Authority that may Legally Summon them, or enable the Members to sit longer than the Souldier will suffer them.

Hence you may behold the sad Condition wherein the Nation stands, without any due reformation in the Church, without Laws, Government, Settlement, or Security, in any thing we have formerly enjoy'd; 'Tis confess the Nation can-

nos be secured (as the case stands) without our Armies both by Sea and Land, either from Invasions from abroad, or Insurrections at home; but if our Armies shall or will be the first that will invade us, and assume to themselves, the Sole and absolute power of Government, doubtlesse then we are in a remediable Condition, when our Servants shall become our Masters.

On the other side, in case our Parliaments, shall act alone and do what they please, without any controule, then we are in the same Condition, as if the Army ruled alone without any other Partnership in the Government.

He thinks our Great Masters of either side, should both of them have be thought themselves of some one *Medium* or other, rather than either of them, should assume to themselves the sole, and supreme power of Government; for that, wheresoever Sovereignty, or any other power of Government, shall act alone, and without any Partnership, it instantly turns into Tyranny: On this consideration, let them both lay this to heart, that when either Parliaments, or our wrongs shall assume to act alone the nature of necessitie, will become Slaves, or no better than so many Asses, assigned to bear the burthen, of that single and unruly power: for 'tis without dispute, that the most lasting, and best Government, is, and must be of a mixt nature or constitution; Its *Belarminus* opinion, *de Roman Pontifice*, who after he had so much magnified, absolute Monarchy; yet at last concludes *Attamen, Monarchiam, mixtam, et temperatam, inter Aristocraciam, et Democraciam, semper meliorem esse puto*; You may remember that the Lacedemonian Kings had their Ephori, that contrould them whensoever they took upon them, *Transire* and to go beyond the bounds of Lawfull Sovereignty: It was the grand Court of *Aragon*, (supprest by *Ferdinando*,) that kept their Kings for many hundred years from Tyranny, and the Natives from Slavery.

To come nearer to the poynnt, I do not conceive that either the late Protectors, *Oliver* and *Richard* as single persons, were absolute, for they had a Parliament, and in the intermissions of Parliaments, an able Council of State, that carried on the affairs of the Common-wealth as joynt Copartners with them: If it be objected that *Oliver* was the first, that dissolved the long Parliament, the answer to this, is soon made, for that they began to call into question the new Government, under which the universall Natives lived in peace, and security, without any disturbance; which to preserve, the Protector, perceiving the Ends, and Aims, dissolved them. You may remember how the late King made it his common practice to call Parliaments and Dissolve them, without their due Effects, at will and pleasure: Is it therefore of necessity; that some few of the Army Officers should

should do the like as they have often done, and destroy the most Essential part of the old English Government, the old security of all the free born Subjects, of this Nation, and that Court which in all Ages hath stop't the current of the Incroachment of the Royal Prerogative, and prevented that Inundation which would have swallowed up all the Subjects Freedoms and Liberties; But the report goes that they will resolve to call a Parliament speedily, If that be their resolution, In Gods name then let it be a Free and Legal one, an the Election of the Members left to the Free-holders and not too much tyed up to the rack of their wills and pleasures, other wise, where will they be found that will sit, when they shall be chosen? since 'tis already in common discourse, and the question put, why should any either accept their Election, or sit, when as the Souldier at his will and pleasure shall send them home as wise as they came to the House?

SIR, To conclude, without doubt there is somewhat if not much amiss, in the mannagery of this work of darknesse, (for so I call it) nor pleasing to Almighty God; 'Tis most true, that all along our many sad and often changes, we have had frequent Fastings, Prayers, and Preachings, but whither they have been rightly address'd, rests the doubt, the Apostle St. James tells us we pray and ask but receive not, because we petition amiss, I fear me this is our case, and therefore let us all more fervently pray unto Almighty God, and heartily beseech him, that our Prayers and addresses may be more pleasing to him, who alone must help and free us from these our Devisions, otherwise we are all lost; It is Unity and Concord, that must set us all aright, and in our right Wits. If a Kingdom, City, or House divided cannot stand, needs must our divisions ruine us, *Concordia res parvae crescunt, discordia dilabuntur*. Therefore let our great Masters lay aside their Ambition and Self-ends, then by Gods good grace, the cure of these our sad distractions will be soon perfected; Therefore it behoves us all to pray unto God, that Unity and Concord may be preserved amongst us, for without it, the Nation cannot be in safety, since as now the case stands, we are all in the highway of Confusion, and never more subject and open to forraign Invasions, then at present; we wish that they which now sit at the Healm, will bethink themselves, and take it into their serious and timely consideration, that the new Amity and Friendship contracted between the two greatest and neighbouring Princes of Christendome, presageth no good Omen to England; and that they will call to mind the late passages and causes at Paris; as also to bethink themselves, that all things are not so safe at home as it should be, and might be *remota causa tollitur effectus*, then the cure will (by Gods good grace) be soon

soon perfected; but as now affairs are carried on; we can expect no other fate to befall us, than dissolution; The Armies divided amongst themselves; the City and the Armies divided, and in Combustion; no due settlement either in the Church or State, and the Courts of Indication, but all in confusion; Sectaries and Schismatics, suffered to disturb the Peace of the Church and State, by the Plots of Jesuits, without any care of redresse. Thus Sir, you may see in what a sad condition wee all stand, and in his great mercy look upon us, and give us all the grace of a true and hearty repentance, and avert those heavy Iudgements, which now threaten this sinfull Nation with utter Ruine and Defolation.

*Your very Loving
And Constant Friend
Tho. Le. Wh.*

*From the Middle Temple
this 15. of December, 1659.*

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